



# COMPOSTING: DO THE ROT THING

## Why Compost?

Composting food and yard scraps is a great way to make an inexpensive, high quality soil amendment for lawn and garden. It also reduces the volume of the garbage stream entering our municipal waste facilities. Adding compost to soil improves its structure, texture, and aeration. Plants grown in compost are stronger and more resistant to disease and insects and, therefore, require less insecticide. Healthy soil absorbs and filters runoff, protecting streams from erosion and pollution.

*Food scraps and yard trimmings can be diverted from landfills through composting.*

## HOW TO COMPOST

### Location:

**Composting Bins and Types:** There are several types of composting bins and tumblers commercially available, but is also possible to make a bin at home. The ideal size for a compost bin is 1 cubic yard (3 x 3 x 3 feet). Smaller piles may not heat well and larger piles may be more difficult to manage.

Wood bins can be made from four used shipping pallets that are tied together with wire.

A wire bin can easily be made with a circular loop of fencing or chicken wire. In order to move or turn the pile, simply pick up the bin and allow the compost to fall through the open bottom. Place the bin next to its last location and fork the top of the pile into the bottom of the new location.

*Pre-made bins, like this one available through the Office of Recycling, are easy to set up.*



### Method:

- 1 Start with a brown layer in your desired location.
- 2 Pile the materials on top of each other directly on the ground, or in a composting bin to contain the compost and keep out the critters.
- 3 Always bury food scraps in the pile or top them with a thick layer of brown materials.
- 4 If you aerate the pile every two to three weeks (by turning with a pitchfork or poking holes in the pile with a broom handle) it will compost faster.
- 5 Compost is ready to use when the raw materials are no longer visible. Finished compost is dark brown and has an earthy smell.

Compost piles should be as damp as a wrung-out sponge. Piles may need to be sprinkled with water occasionally during the summer. They may need to be covered with a tarp if there are extended periods of wet weather.

### Micro- and Macroorganisms:

Tiny organisms inside of your compost pile are the ones actually turning waste into rich soil. Macroorganisms include earthworms, sow bugs, and other insects. Microorganisms include bacteria, fungi, and protozoa. These elements will come to your pile naturally as long as the pile is not located on concrete or a paved surface. Place your bin on the ground so organisms can colonize the compost pile.



# COMPOSTABLE MATERIALS

Always add more brown materials than green (up to twice as much by volume). Too many greens will produce a smelly, soggy mess. Too many browns doesn't cause problems, it will just slow the composting process.

## Browns (Carbon)

- Leaves and dried yard clippings
- Straw
- Woody materials
- Shredded Paper



## Greens (Nitrogen)

- Grass and fresh yard clippings
- Food scraps
- Barnyard manure

## Ok To Compost

- Fruit and vegetable scraps
- Egg shells
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Tea bags
- Leaves, grass, and yard clippings
- Lint
- Barnyard manure
- Shredded paper, cardboard, or tissues
- Aquarium water, algae, and plants

## Do Not Compost

- Meat or dairy products
- Anything containing oil or grease
- Fish scraps
- Diseased plants
- Bones
- Sawdust from plywood, treated, or painted wood
- Clippings recently treated with pesticides
- Insect-infested plants

**Resources** // Environmental Protection Agency // [www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home](http://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home)

Frederick County Government offers free home composting classes each year. For information, visit [www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/gorecycle](http://www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/gorecycle)



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